TYCI

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FREE

Beyoncé and the Mrs Carter Show

NATASHA RADMEHR WAXES LYRICAL ON THE BEYONCÉ / THE MRS CARTER SHOW SITUATION.

Oh no, not another opinion piece about bloody Beyoncé's world bloody tour! Yes, I'm afraid so. But bear with me…

I suppose I should start by saying that I write for a wedding magazine. Prior to writing for this magazine, my knowledge of weddings was limited at best. They rarely crossed my mind, in the same way that my thoughts never linger on golf or Keane, because I wasn't that interested in them. Sorry, need to pause for a moment. Just thinking about the people out there who like golf and Keane, and feeling deeply troubled.

Ok. Where was I? Oh yes – weddings. I didn't – and still don't, not really – know what my own wedding might be like, or even if I wanted to get married at all. Since starting this job almost two years ago, I've learned a lot; not only about what a good wedding dress looks like (turns out they don't all look the same… who knew?), but about how many sexist wedding traditions are still blindly, unquestioningly adhered to in the UK. Most brides are still walked up the aisle and given away by their dad; the speeches are expected to be given by the groom, best man and father of the bride while the women zip it and cringe; the white dress that a bride wears has over time come to symbolise the virginity that she most likely hasn't possessed since she was 16 and steaming (originally, though, white was supposed to represent wealth); and it's generally taken for granted that the bride will take her husband's surname.

This last custom has been the subject of some serious internet grumblings this week, ever since Beyoncé announced her upcoming world tour, titled The Mrs Carter Show. Even though she and Jay Z both reportedly changed their surnames to Knowles-Carter after getting married in 2009, and in spite of the fact that she's still usually referred to in the media as Beyoncé Knowles, Queen B has decided to allude to her marital status with what Grace Dent has scathingly called 'a homespun merchandising moniker fragrant with Good Housekeeping notions of baked peach cobblers' (The Independent, February 6th).

I understand where Grace's cynicism is coming from. She thinks that in using the name Mrs Carter, Beyoncé is defining herself as a wife in order to have a new persona that'll encourage ticket sales and give her fodder for her next few albums. Kind of like when Madonna reinvents herself by finding a new way for her vagina to come out and say hiya. But rather than having the Madonna effect of making young girls immediately want to put ten pairs of trousers on, there's a concern that Beyoncé's impressionable fans will merely aspire to that day when they too can get married and become Mrs Guynextdoor, rather than flicking the Vs to tradition and keeping their own name.

However, I think the Mrs Carter Show is simply Beyoncé's snappy way of saying 'hey fans! since my last tour I've got married and dropped a sprog!'. Historically, her tour names

have been unimaginative and a little bit shit. Her 2003 tour was called 'Dangerously in Love', 2007's was 'The Beyoncé Experience', and 2009's was simply 'I Am…'. You're what, Bey? Unsure how to finish that title? I would view The Mrs Carter Show as a weird business move if she stopped writhing around in leather to instead don a pinny and sing about how amazing it is to hoover the (homemade) cake crumbs out of Jay Z's ballsack, but so far that's not happened. I would find the fact that she didn't call it The Mrs Knowles-Carter Show odd, were it not for the fact that hyphenated names look stupid enough on a Christmas card envelope, let alone a poster. I don't think it's out of character for her (or any popstar) to reference a new chapter in her life. Her performance and songs are still going to leave those who see her live, man or woman, feeling empowered.

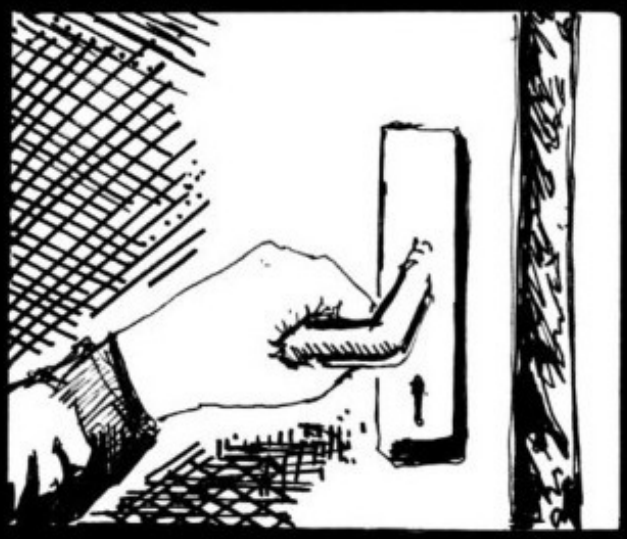
Perhaps Beyoncé should have considered the fact that she's reinforcing a convention that prioritises men, but then again, maybe it's become such an ingrained norm that it didn't cross her mind. Maybe she just likes the way Mrs Carter sounds. Just because Beyoncé sings about independent women and single ladies, it doesn't make her Germaine fucking Greer. I absolutely believe that no woman should feel pressured into taking her husband's surname in order to be a 'proper' wife; but equally, it's unhelpful to slate those who actually want to do it. It doesn't make you a bad feminist. I think that couples now tend to view sharing a surname – whether that's the man's, woman's or a hybrid of both – as being a symbol of unity, as opposed to ownership. That notion is abhorrent to some and appealing to others. What's the problem, so long as a considered decision is being made?

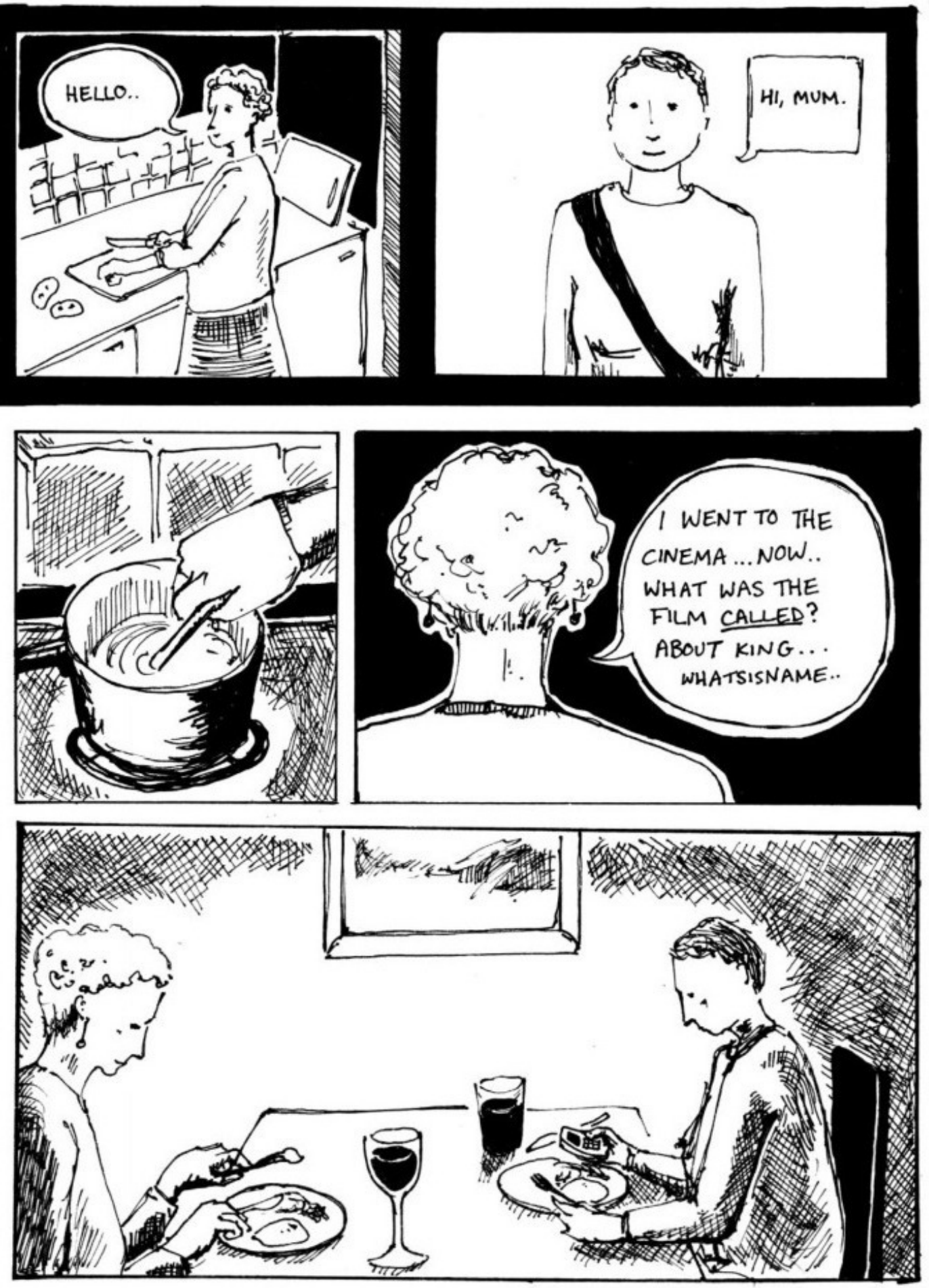
The best thing we can do is educate young women at school and at home about the fact that they actually have a choice, rather than assume that the responsibility for doing so lies with a popstar. Feminism should be taught as part of social education at schools, rather than be reduced to a solitary history lesson on the Suffragettes. Girls should be encouraged to analyse and question traditions like this that make no sense. So fuck if celebrities are influential. We can be too.

For more of Natasha's musings, head to natasharadical.blogspot.co.uk.

a heartfelt something... for my mother

BY HELEN WRIGHT + JENNY SPEIRS




HELLO..
HI, MUM.
I WENT TO THE CINEMA ...NOW.. WHAT WAS THE FILM CALLED? ABOUT KING... WHATSISNAME..

THE PINK SARI GANG

CATRIONA REILLY WRITES ABOUT THE PINK SARI GANG, A GROUP OF VIGILANTES IN UTTER PRADESH.

ALL around the world there are bad ladies dealing with brothers and sisters flaking and perpetrating – and I don't mean 'bad' in the traditional sense or even the Azealia Banks sense. I mean ladies genuinely instigating real and lasting social change.

One group of women doing just that are the Gulabi Gang or the 'Pink Sari' gang (so-called for their uniform of choice) and they're doing a pretty fine job of flipping the script. The gang are a group of female vigilantes dealing primarily with issues that affect women within Indian society, such as domestic abuse, rape, dowry, child marriage, acid attacks, female illiteracy, feticide and the general 'put up and shut up' attitude towards women. Unlike many other female activist groups, the Gulabi gang don't just throw placards in the air or push petitions; they go straight to the perpetrator and extract their own raging justice.

Aside from their unorthodox methods, what makes their efforts particularly flossy is the fact that they operate in the Northern Indian Bundelkhand district of Uttar Pradesh. The region is rife with poverty, starvation, violence, corruption and a rigid adherence to both patriarchy and the oppressive Indian caste system. Life in Bundelkhand is hard for anyone, and for women especially it is a constant struggle, but does this make the gang's modus operandi a necessity or are their tactics still morally acceptable?

Founded in 2006, the gang was established by Sampat Pal Devi who was herself a child bride at the age of 12, married off to a man eight years her senior. She founded the gang after intervening in a case of domestic abuse which led to the husband violently retaliating and abusing Sampat herself. Unlike many of the region's downtrodden women, she didn't just brush her shoulders off. She returned the next day with a posse of ladies to beat the man upside the head with her laathi, a traditional bamboo fighting stick which all members of the gang carry...

The gang fights to establish equal rights in education for rural woman who are often deliberately denied access to basic schooling, meaning many women are illiterate and unemployed. Another important aspect of the gang's work is to help women set up their own businesses to free themselves from crushing poverty, as well as organising non-violent rallies and marches to expose oppressive men and working to 'redomesticate' women who have been thrown out or beaten by their husbands. The gang threatens said husband, telling them to take better care of their wives or else they'll be back to give him a good rattling…

Regardless of the moral question, without the Gulabis a large number of women in Uttar Pradesh would still be suffering. Besides, the empowerment they make women feel is just as fierce as any strike from a laathi. It is this empowerment that will hopefully nurture a mass societal change brought about through discourse and fair political progress, not just beatdown madness.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT WWW.TYCI.ORG.UK

FUNNY PECULIAR

Lucy Brouwer gives her perspective on what it's like to be a woman in the world of comedy.

BACK in the '90s , when comedy was "the new rock 'n' roll", my heroes were all comedians. Before I could go to music gigs, I went to comedy shows – stand up in theatres, art centres and for one memorable weekend, the Edinburgh Fringe. I had a Rob Newman poster on my wall, but awkward teenager that I was, I wasn't just one of the screaming girls in the audience, I wanted to be like him.

I had pen pals – boys who wanted to be funny – but it never occurred to me that I could have a go at picking up a microphone too.
Years later, music mostly took the place of comedy, but I still saw my favourites on tour and went to the odd small club show. Naturally disposed to use humour as a defence mechanism, I found myself being "the funny one", then a friend saw a Stand Up Comedy Workshop advertised and dared me to give it a try.

At first the night school class was what I imagined a Prozac users support group might be like. Surely no one well-adjusted would feel the urge to bare their soul to a crowd of strangers, let alone attempt to make them laugh?

I found the hardest thing, apart from the nerves which almost gave me an ulcer, was hearing the same jokes over and over again. Stand up comics can be a bunch of miserable sods, saving all their humour for the stage. On the circuit a comic will tell the same gags to a different crowd every night, but after the fifth hearing, dick jokes just aren't funny. Six months of analysing what made people laugh and I was losing my own sense of humour.

People told me I must have a "set of brass balls" to get on stage at all. I wondered where I was meant to keep them? One compere of an otherwise male bill insisted I must be a lesbian because I wore DMs and didn't fancy any of the other comics… Stand up is full of paradoxes – guys telling gags about their own sexual inadequacies astonished if every female in the room doesn't fawn over them. Stand ups' egos are massive and easily bruised.

Made uncomfortable by some acts' casual sexism and need to shock, I took part in a women-only competition and found a more welcoming atmosphere. I saw Sarah Millican in the early days of her career, mining laughs from her divorce. Success seems to depend on the comic's confidence in their own persona and ability to remember jokes, neither of which I could ever quite find.
In a lot of ways I used the fact of being a woman in a male dominated area as an excuse for not carrying on. That and the stomach pain – performing comedy is a powerful natural laxative.

In the end I didn't want it enough. Comics must be single minded, have to really work for it. But Janey Godley (a Glasgow comic who can hold a room better than most) told me that once you're a stand up, there is no going back – you can never be a civilian again…

FOR MORE OF LUCY'S THOUGHTS, HEAD TO HTTP://NOTROCK.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK.

TYCI LIVE #6

6 MONTH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL

with a live performance from
PATRICIA PANTHER +
PRETTY UGLY DJ set
SATURDAY 20TH APRIL
11pm – 3am
Bloc, 117 Bath Street, Glasgow
FREE before midnight; £2 after

Patricia Panther

Anyone who writes TYCI on their knuckles will get in free after midnight too

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TYCI ACOUSTIC

(in association with Bloc)

at Oxfam Music for Record Store Day

SATURDAY 20TH APRIL, 4pm

Oxfam Music, 171 Byres Rd, Glasgow
To celebrate Record Store Day, TYCI are running a one-off pop up event at Oxfam Music with zines, badges, acoustic sets and more. Check the website for full details.

TYCI ON SUBCITY RADIO

Thursday 28th March 5 – 7pm
www.subcity.org/shows/tyci

Subcity Radio

TYCI is a collective run by women.
We have a website where we write about things which affect us and put together features on art, theatre, music, film, politics, current affairs and most things in between. We also talk about similar stuff on our monthly radio show on Subcity.

This zine is a collection of some of the content from our site and is distributed in conjunction with our monthly live event at Bloc.

If you would like to get involved, reply to any of our articles or just generally say hi, hit us up on contact.tyci@gmail.com or visit www.tyci.org.uk.

Cover image by Vivienne Chan /// Zine design by Cecilia Stamp